

news release

05 February 2025

Greater powers for Sussex come a step closer with government backing for devolution

An opportunity to gain new powers and investment for Sussex has moved a step nearer with the government's agreement to make the area a priority for devolution.

Following an expression of interest from the leaders of West Sussex County Council, Brighton & Hove City Council, and East Sussex County Council, ministers have approved proposals to create a mayoral strategic authority for Sussex, made up of an elected mayor and two members of each constituent authority, with strategic powers for transport, public safety, health, environment and climate change, housing, economic growth, skills and jobs.

As well as unlocking new powers and investment for the region, it would give the people of Sussex a stronger voice in how national decisions affect them and enable more decisions to be taken locally.

The government will now begin a consultation to seek the views of people and organisations in Sussex.

All three of Sussex's upper-tier local authorities – Brighton & Hove City Council, East Sussex County Council and West Sussex County Council – agree that devolution could unlock new funding and give people a stronger voice over national decisions which affect them and greater power to steer major projects across the area.

It follows the Government's White Paper on English Devolution published in December which outlined its aim to bring more decision-making down from Westminster to local communities.

Cllr Paul Marshall, Leader of West Sussex County Council, said: "This is fantastic news for the whole of Sussex and West Sussex in particular. A mayoral authority will give our communities greater influence in the big decisions that affect the region, such as our highways, housing, and economic growth, plus much-needed long-term financial stability. I'm pleased the government has accepted us on to its priority programme, meaning we can unlock these benefits sooner rather than later. There is much to do, but please be assured we will continue our focus on delivering essential services and putting the needs of our residents first."

Cllr Keith Glazier, Leader of East Sussex County Council said: "I believe this is excellent news for the people of Sussex because it's an opportunity for more decisions to be made locally and for greater investment here. I'm pleased the government has recognised our potential to prosper and develop together."

Cllr Bella Sankey, Leader of Brighton & Hove City Council, said: "This is an historic and exciting moment for our region. I am optimistic and ambitious about devolution because of the direct benefits I know it will bring

to all communities in Sussex. It will mean that more money is directly invested in our area and that better transport, affordable housing and skills and job creation can be accelerated. I'm looking forward to meeting with residents, businesses and partners to ensure that all of our communities have the opportunity to shape the future."

Local councils in every part of Sussex would work closely with the mayoral strategic authority and would continue to deliver day-to-day services.

Alongside devolution, the government is asking for proposals for unitary councils in all parts of Sussex, moving away from the two-tier model of county and borough or district councils where those exist. Discussion with partners will continue on how this might be arranged.

There are no immediate changes to the operation of local authorities in Sussex or the services they provide.

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Notes

The plans for devolution and local government reorganisation do not change the councils' commitment to service delivery for communities across Sussex.

The expected timeline following agreement of the devolution proposal:

- A devolution consultation will be held before the end of March 2025.
- The results of the devolution consultation will be assessed in the Spring 2025 following which a ministerial decision will be taken as to whether to proceed with a mayoral strategic authority (prior to unitary re-organisation). The national spending review will then confirm future mayoral investment funds for new mayoral areas.
- Relevant legislation will be laid before parliament in relation to the creation of strategic authorities.
- In March 2026 notice of mayoral elections will be given for a mayoral election in May 2026. A decision whether to move to a mayoral strategic authority under the reorganised arrangements would follow.

There will follow a separate process of local government re-organisation:

- A formal invitation to submit reorganisation proposals will be issued to all authorities in January.
- At the end of 2025 and in early 2026 ministers will consider unitary proposals and delivery phasing with statutory consultations being undertaken on the first tranche of proposals.
- Timelines for the remainder of the reorganisation process will be subject to the proposals received.

[English Devolution White Paper](#)

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